

## Protocol for Head Lice

When a child comes to school with head lice, every precaution is taken to ensure the issue is addressed in a sensitive, discreet and timely manner to protect the affected student, minimize his or her time away from the classroom and prevent the spread of head lice to classmates.

School nurses and staff work with families to educate them on treating head lice. The typical protocol is as follows:

1. As soon as it is determined that a child is affected with lice, his or her parents are notified and encouraged to pick up their child to begin treatment.
2. Upon pickup, parents are given information on lice treatment and advised to treat the child that day.
3. The child's head lice must be treated at home before returning to school. Parents are asked to accompany the child to school following treatment to allow a staff member to determine that the child has been treated and no longer has active head lice.
4. School nurses and staff monitor the affected child(ren) after treatment and watch for potential reoccurrence.

Head lice themselves are not an illness and they are not known to spread disease, therefore they are not considered to be a health hazard. The burden on students and families resulting from extended time away from the classroom outweighs the risks of head lice. For these reasons, both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses advise against "no-nit" policies requiring that a child be free of nits before they can return to school.

It should be noted that the presence of nits are not always indicative of active head lice. Nits that are visible more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch away from the scalp may be the shells left behind after lice eggs hatch. Nits may still be present after successful treatment. School nurses and staff do their best to ensure that children with active head lice are appropriately treated at home before returning to the classroom.